

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**SECURITY KEYS FOR ENHANCED DOWNSTREAM ACCESS SECURITY
FOR ELECTRONIC FILE SYSTEMS AND DRIVES**

Disclosed is a method and system for protecting electronic files from unauthorized access. The drive on which the file is stored is provided with a hardware identification code, which is unique to the drive and known only by a user to whom access to the files stored on the drive is authorized. An Operating System (OS) extension is created. The OS extension allows a user to provide a security code required to access a requested drive. OS device driver, working in conjunction with the extension of the OS checks the requested drive to determine if an access code is required, and the drive responds with the security code or a default code. The default code indicates that no user-provided access code is required, and the drive is globally accessible to users on the system. Thus, when the default code is returned by the drive, automatic access to the drive is provided. When a security code is returned from the drive, the OS compares the security code to the access code provided by the user at an earlier stage in the process and provides the user with access to the drive only when the access code matches the security code.